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**To:** <coombsn@scsenate.org>  
**Date:** 10/30/2008 8:26 AM  
**Subject:** comment on energy

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to comment on three aspects of South Carolina's energy future.

First, as a result global warming, as you know, sea level is almost certain to rise by a foot during the next century. What is less well known is that the predictive models offering that forecast ignore several feedback loops that could greatly accelerate the sea level rise. (Those feedback loops include melting permafrost, which would release huge quantities of methane gas, which in turn is a much more effective global insulator, molecule for molecule, than is CO2.) In view of the resulting possibility of catastrophic sea level rise, and with much of SC aptly called the Low Country, our state government should have the motivation to do everything possible to slow and, if possible, to reverse global warming.

Second, increased reliance on nuclear energy is presented by its advocates as a way to meet energy needs without increasing greenhouse gas emissions. In my estimation, reliance on nuclear energy trades one possible disaster, global warming, for another, a Three Mile Island or Chernobyl. I understand it is theoretically possible to build a nuclear reactor that cannot suffer a meltdown, but I also understand that new design is not contemplated for the reactors being planned for South Carolina. No reactor should be built unless that new foolproof design is part of the project.

Still on the subject of nuclear reactors, it is unconscionable to plan additional reactors when the country still has no repository for storing the wastes. Along with a failsafe design, a storage plan for wastes must be ironclad before we march ahead with more reactors.

Third, much evidence indicates that conservation, paired with alternative energy sources, could make both nuclear reactors and offshore drilling unnecessary. Offshore drilling on South Carolina's coast would yield relatively little oil, but it would imperil the beaches in our hurricane prone area, and even in accident-free times, the ancillary industrial apparatus onshore needed to support offshore drilling would undermine the tourist industry. Offshore wind turbines make much more sense.

Wind alone will not meet the future energy needs of our state, but there is a large solar potential here as well. This potential exists for large scale operations (for example, high temperature steam turbines or large arrays of photovoltaic cells) as well as small scale installations (for example, residential hot water heaters or small scale photovoltaic arrays).

A well designed energy policy for our state. one that spurs conservation and alternative energy, can propel a much needed spurt of sustainable economic growth. The other path, relying on costly and dangerous nuclear power or offshore drilling, will cripple South Carolina for the foreseeable future.

Yours truly,

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